

Good Doctrine, Good Deeds: *Good Doctrine on Display*

Titus 2:1-10

Preached by Minister Jason Tarn at HCC on February 26, 2012

Introduction

- ❖ *Is it possible that you might be a Christian atheist?* That's the question posed in Craig Groeschel's book of the same name, ***The Christian Atheist: Believing in God but Living As If He Doesn't Exist***. Regardless of what we may assent to in our heads and profess with our lips, the question is: ***Do our actual lives affirm the existence of God or deny him altogether?*** You might resemble a Christian in your theology, but if you more resemble an atheist in your living, then you fit the description of a Christian atheist.

- ❖ But this is not a new phenomenon. As we've been studying the book of Titus, we've seen the Apostle Paul address the presence of Christian atheists within the churches of Crete. They were men who professed to know God but denied him by their works (1:16). They were false teachers who were upsetting whole families through their ungodly influence and teaching.
 - So Paul directed Titus to remain on the island to work with the congregations to identify and appoint godly, qualified elders to lead by teaching sound doctrine, by rebuking these opponents, and by setting an example of godliness.

- ❖ Look with me at **chapter 1:1**. We've looked at this verse already but I want to highlight a phrase. "*Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and **their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.***"
 - The truth of God *accords* with godliness. **That means godly, sound doctrine should correspond with sound, godly lives.** The two should be in accord with each other.

- ❖ Paul is saying that his apostolic mission is to help people to *not only* trust Jesus and know his truth but to also exhibit a matching godliness in their lives – something that was lacking in his opponents as he explained at the end of chapter 1. And that is why he starts **chapter 2:1** by saying, "*But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.*"
 - Titus is to be different and to teach differently. He is to exhibit in his own life and to make central in his own teaching – not only sound doctrine – but also what accords with it, that is, **all the ethical instructions and duties that sound, biblical doctrine would demand of us.** Preach good doctrine AND the good deeds that fit with that doctrine, that should flow out of it.

- ❖ If we, as a church, do this faithfully, then there is no way a Christian atheist will find it comfortable to sit under our teaching week after week. Not because we're hammering away at them without any love or grace, but because we are impressing upon people the priority in Scripture on having both sound theology AND sound living.
 - I think in our church there is a tendency to love sound theology, to love getting things right, to put our doctrinal ducks in a row. ***But do we exhibit the same kind of zeal for pursuing the good deeds that accord with our good doctrine?***

- ❖ That is the question that keeps jumping out in each chapter of Titus. **Our behavior is a true barometer of our beliefs, and if that is so, then we have to prioritize the soundness of our living along with the soundness of our theology.** We have to pursue both.

- ❖ Friends, I speak to you, not out of a position of superiority, but as a fellow sinner who struggles to find that balance. This morning I am even more aware than usual that I am preaching not only to you but to myself. My goal is to help you (and me) figure out what *sound living that accords with sound doctrine* really looks like in our lives.
 - Now since Paul identifies five groups of people that you normally find in a church, I've outlined our passage in like manner, asking the question: *What does "sound living" look like for 1) older men, 2) older women, 3) younger women, 4) younger men, and 5) for the workplace?*

What is the Sound Theology Behind This Sound Living?

- ❖ **But before we consider what sound living looks like, we need some idea of the sound theology that should be motivating this kind of living being described.** If deeds flow out of doctrine, then I'd be doing you a disservice to stand here telling you how you ought to live as Christians and never make the connection with the doctrine that empowers such living.
 - Well the good doctrine Paul had in mind is actually found in vv11-15 of our chapter, which Pastor David will be preaching next Sunday. I kind of wish if he could go first and explain the theology, and I could follow and explain how to live in light of it.
- ❖ Let's just read **vv11-12**. After giving instructions for sound living, Paul explains why Christians should be living this way, *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly live in the present age."*
 - The good doctrine Paul had in mind can be sum up like this: **It is the belief in the enabling grace of God to not only bring salvation for a future age but to also train us for godliness in the present age.** So if you have a sound belief in God's enabling grace, it should translate into sound living marked by such grace. So let's consider what this kind of living looks like.

Sound Living for Older Men

- ❖ Paul starts by addressing the older men in the church. **Now some of you may be wondering whether you fall into the category of older or younger.** Let me just say there is no clearcut age range. The word for "*older*" is used in **Luke 1:18** where Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, calls himself an "*old man*" when he is shocked by the angel Gabriel's announcement that his elderly wife will bear him a son. So based on that, it generally refers to an age where child-bearing is not naturally expected.
 - And the word "*younger*" is used in the NT of actual children and youth BUT also of those even up to age forty. It's the same word Paul used in **1 Timothy 4:12** where he tells Timothy to let no anyone despise him for his "youth". Most commentators think that Timothy was in his late twenties to mid thirties at that time of the letter.
- ❖ So that gives you an idea of what older and younger could mean, but again there is no clear line because really the terms are relative in reference to those within an actual congregation.

So I'll let you decide in which category you think you fall in relation to the rest of us. But for most, it is fairly clear where you land.

- ❖ Now read **v2** with me. “*Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.*” **So what does sound living look like for older men in the church?** It can be stated in two ways.
 - ❖ **1) You exhibit a certain gravitas that others come to respect.** If you're not familiar with that word, you use “gravitas” to describe someone who commands respect by the way they carry themselves with dignity or seriousness. You say he has a certain gravitas about him.
 - I get this idea from the word “*dignified*” in v2. It could also be translated as “*worthy of honor or respect*”. Paul is saying that older men should have a certain demeanor about them, a dignity, a gravitas, that makes us want to respect them.
 - And it's probably because they are “*sober-minded*”, which means to be free from excessive influence of passion or emotion. And they are “*self-controlled*”, which means they know how to restrain themselves.
 - ❖ Put that together, Paul is saying that, for “*older men*” in the church, sound living means you are have matured to the point of being able to control your internal passions and your outward actions, and thus you lead a godly, dignified life that commands our respect.
 - Paul expects older men to be the natural leaders in the church. It's no coincidence that these very traits are found in the qualification lists for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
 - ❖ So sound living for older men means exhibiting a certain gravitas. **2) It means you model certain virtues that others want to emulate.** I get this idea when Paul says older men are to be “*sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness*”. That last term means being patient to wait for the fulfillment of whatever you're hoping for. **In other words, we're talking about being sound in faith, love, and hope – the three cardinal virtues of the Christian life.**
 - Again, because these are common virtues for all believers, it suggests that Paul expected older men to set the example in these virtues for the rest of us to follow.
 - ❖ Let me speak to the older men of this church. **Brothers, you are the ones to whom younger believers, like myself, naturally look up to.** You may not feel like you have that gravitas that draws people. You may not feel so sound in your virtues that anyone would want to follow you. And to be honest, in your own flesh, you're right.
 - But, remember, the grace of God has appeared in the person of Jesus Christ to not only save you from your sins BUT to enable you, to train you to live “*self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age*” – that is, sound lives that command our respect and are worthy our emulation.
 - ❖ Gentlemen, many of you are old enough to be my father, so I say this with the respect of a son. Learn this grace, lean on this grace, and then step up and lead us. We want to follow.

Sound Living for Older Women

- ❖ The second group that Paul addresses are older women in the church. Read **v3**, “*Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior; not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good.*” **So what does sound living look like for them?** Two things:
 - ❖ **1) You have a demeanor of reverence.** Older women are to be “*reverent in behavior*”. Some of the commentaries I read said there is evidence to suggest that Paul was referring to the demeanor of a temple priestess, which would have been familiar for his Gentile audience.
 - Titus is to exhort older women to live lives that are characterized by a godly reverence, much like *gravitas*. That’s why Paul says, “Older women *likewise* are to be reverent in behavior.” Like older men, their behavior ought to command the respect and emulation of younger believers.
 - And in particular, they do so by not being “*slanders or slaves to much wine*”. Older women who live in accordance with their sound doctrine are keenly aware of the snares of the devil and avoid such foolish talk and foolish behavior. That would be unbecoming for a priestess of the holy one true God.
 - ❖ **2) Sound living for older women means you train younger women.** At the end of **v3**, Paul says they are to “*teach what is good*”, and then in **v4** he continues to identify who they are to teach, “*and so train the young women.*”
 - What this means is that one of the primary effects of knowing and cherishing sound doctrine should be an impulse and desire within you to want to teach and to build into the lives of others, especially those younger than you – a heart for discipleship.
- ❖ Let me speak to the older women of this church. **Sisters, as Christians we are a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so carry yourselves with the demeanor of a godly, reverent priestess.** Younger women should want to learn from you and to be trained by you. And notice that though Titus is told to instruct older men, older women, and younger men, he is not told to give personal instruction to younger women in the church. It would not be above reproach for men like Titus to take on such a personal task. That is why it is up to you.
 - *Again, who is sufficient for such things?* In your flesh, you are not. But in Christ, by his grace that is training you up for godliness, you are. You can live this way.

Sound Living for Younger Women

- ❖ Let’s see what older women should be teaching younger women. Read **vv4-5**, “*and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*” **So what does sound living for younger women look like?** Three things:
 - ❖ **1) You love your family.** In particular, your husband and children. Now, remember, these instructions are for younger women in general, not just married ones with children. In Paul’s culture, he could assume that was the status of most women, but regardless, his words apply to all younger women.

- ❖ **Now notice that loving your husband and children is the very first lesson an older woman should pass on to a younger sister, which is so countercultural in our day.** Most older women today, those of the Baby Boomer generation, would feel that it is imperative for them to empower younger women (Gen Xers and Millennials) to break from traditional gender roles and to pursue, first and foremost, your own dreams – another word for career and professional aspirations.
 - But Scripture says that teaching younger women “*what is good*” entails teaching them to love their families first and foremost. And likewise, Paul says in v5 to train younger women to be “*working at home*”.

- ❖ Some of you cringe when you see that in the Bible. It sounds archaic and chauvinistic. But we have to be careful *not* to read our cultural issues into their context. No one in Titus’ church was debating whether a wife or mother could pursue a career or be the primary breadwinner in the family. Those weren’t issues in Titus’ day.
 - So when it says younger women are to be “*working at home*”, don’t read that as a prohibition against working mothers today. That wasn’t in view.

- ❖ But what was in view – back then and still today – is that a married woman with children has been called by God to the vocation of wife and mother, and **sound living requires that she not neglect her duty to love and serve her husband and children within the home – whether or not she has a 9 to 5 job.** It’s about priorities.

- ❖ Let me show you another verse that helps us understand Paul’s point. Turn with me to **1 Timothy 5:13-14**. Here Paul is rebuking foolish younger widows in the church, “*They learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.*”
 - In light of these verses, the contrast in our passage is not between an unsound wife who pursues a profession versus a sound wife who always stays at home. Rather, it’s between the idle, busybody who goes from house to house versus the woman who prioritizes her house and works in that home to love and serve her family.

- ❖ **2) You discipline yourself.** Paul says in v5 that younger women are “*to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind.*” Here we see another mention of the key theme in this passage “*self-control*”. Coupled with the word for “*pure*”, it communicates something like “chaste”. Younger women who live in accordance with sound doctrine have chaste lives and marriages.

- ❖ **3) You submit to your own husband.** The second half of v5 says, “*and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*” We could have a whole sermon on this verse, but for our purposes let me point out two things.
 - **First, sound living calls for younger women to submit to their own husband and not to men in general.** Paul is not talking about the submission of an entire gender to another. Here the duty of submission is narrow. It’s within the home.

- ❖ **The second observation is that the tense of the word implies a voluntary submission on the wife's part.** Nowhere in Scripture are husbands told to subject their wives under their authority. It is always a voluntary submission and should be read in light of v4 and the call to love your own husband. Apparently, loving your husband and being submissive to him can be co-existing attitudes and desires in the same woman.
- ❖ Many of us wish Paul would have added some qualifications and emphasize, as he does elsewhere, the equal value and dignity of husbands and wives. But he doesn't because he doesn't see the teaching of submission in marriage as problematic, requiring qualifications each time he brings it up. It's the kind of living that accords with sound doctrine.
 - By living in this way, the Word of God will not be reviled and spoken ill of. The outside world will have no basis to accuse Christianity of making people worse or having no real impact on a person's life. Sound living can shut the mouth of critics.
- ❖ Let me speak a word to younger women in the church. **Sisters, you might find it strange that Scripture says younger women have to be trained to love their husbands and their children.** For a new bride on her wedding day, loving her husband feels like the easiest thing to do. And for expectant first-time mothers, who have yet to deal with sleepless nights, loving her children feels natural.
 - **But once marriage or motherhood begins, you're suddenly confronted with the reality that you, your husband, and your children are all sinners.** And the call to love and serve fellow sinners is never easy and never feels natural. That is why older women need to take younger sisters aside and teach them about the enabling grace of God that redeems you and trains you to love your families with much grace.

Sound Living for Younger Men

- ❖ And now in v6 Paul focuses on younger men in the church. *“Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.” So what does sound living look like for younger men?* Three things:
 - **1) You discipline yourself.** Here again is the key characteristic of sound living. It's the ability to restrain your passions and control your actions in a way that demonstrates you have sound beliefs.
- ❖ Now we have to be very careful here. You could totally pull v6 out of context and use it to hammer young men. *“Scripture says to control yourself. Be more disciplined. Stop sinning and live sound lives.”* But that's just preaching moralism if you divorce biblical commands from biblical doctrine – if you command certain deeds without offering the very doctrine that enables our Christian obedience.
 - But within the context of having soundly taught younger men about the grace of God that teaches you to say “no” to ungodliness, then it is appropriate to tell younger men to control themselves, to be more disciplined – so long as they are leaning on grace.

- ❖ But at the same time, don't just tell them what to do. Set an example for them to follow. That is why Paul shifts focus in **vv7-8** directly onto Titus. He tells Titus, "*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.*"
 - Brothers, that means sound living for you also means **2) You imitate those who model sound living**. That requires the humility to admit that you can't walk the walk on your own. You need others, especially mentors to look up to and follow.
- ❖ This is what discipleship is all about. It's about an older believer influencing a younger believer by example, by being a "*model of good works*" in all respects of life. Showing them how to translate good doctrine into good deeds in the home, the church, the workplace, the school, and society. **And if a young man is sound in his doctrine, then he'll demonstrate that soundness by his willingness to learn from those who model good works.**
- ❖ And sound living also means **3) You learn from those who teach sound theology**. Find and follow those who model sound living but also find and sit under the teaching of those who show "*integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned.*"
 - This is so important because, again, Christian living divorced from Christian theology will never stay sound for very long. It will quickly degenerate into moralism and man-centered religiosity. Sound Christian living requires believers to be constantly trained under sound Christian teaching, namely the kind that focuses on the grace of God in the person and saving work of Jesus Christ.

Sound Living for the Workplace

- ❖ Lastly, Paul addresses a common member of an ancient Greco-Roman households, the slave. Look at **v9a**, "*Bondservants (slaves) are to be submissive to their own masters in everything.*"
 - Now don't get thrown off by the mention of slaves and masters. Your initial reaction might be to think of New World slavery where black slaves were forced to serve white masters. But it wouldn't be fair to read that into the New Testament context. In fact, 1st-century Greco-Roman slaves had much in common with modern-day workers and employees like us.
- ❖ In those days, slavery was not race-based, and it was seen as a viable means of improving your economic and social position. Slavery was often a means to pay off a debt or to obtain Roman citizenship. So it was rarely life-long. Most 1st-century slaves could reasonably expect their eventual freedom.
 - But having said that, I'm not trying to justify the practice or deny the abuses that no doubt took place. **Slavery is never prescribed or endorsed in Scripture**. To treat anyone more as property than as person is inherently wrong and denies the image of God endowed to every human being.

- ❖ But my point is that the 1st-century slave-master relationship bears enough resemblance to the modern-day employee-employer relationship to draw a comparison.
- ❖ ***So what does sound living look like for a Christian employee?*** Two things: **1) You submit to your own boss.** Sound theology would include the understanding that there is no authority over us except that which God has established (Rom. 13:1). That means all Christians live under various spheres of authority, with the lordship of Christ being universal and ultimate.
 - So since Christ established all authorities including that of your boss, then our submission to Jesus' lordship requires our submission to the proper authorities placed in our lives. And in the workplace, that means submitting to your own boss. That is what sound Christian living looks like.
- ❖ **2) You honor your boss with good honest work.** Read **vv9b-10**. *“They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative [the focus is on your attitude], not pilfering, but showing all good faith [the focus is on your integrity], so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.*
 - For a 1st-century slave to exhibit this kind of attitude and integrity towards his master and his work would have turned heads. People would have scratched their heads wondering why these slaves would behave in this peculiar way, and therefore the Christian beliefs that motivated such behavior will be seen as all the more attractive. By working in this manner, they are adorning the doctrine of God our Savior.
- ❖ So ask yourself this question, **“How does my attitude and integrity at work affect how the Gospel is perceived in my workplace?”** As a Christian employee or student, the attractiveness and credibility of the Christian Gospel can either be adorned or defaced by how you carry yourself and go about doing your work in the workplace or the classroom.

Conclusion

- ❖ A singular diamond by itself is beautiful, but if you set it in an elegant, hand-crafted ring, that precious stone becomes all the more attractive. You adorn the diamond by setting it in a ring.
 - **In the same way, the Gospel of Christ our Savior is beautiful beyond compare just by itself, but when you set it in the life of a Christian who pursues sound living that accords with sound doctrine – you have now adorned the Gospel.** It is now all the more attractive and glorious in the eyes of the unbelieving world.
- ❖ **The glory and beauty of Christ in the Gospel adorned by the lives of his people.** That should be our goal. That should be what motivates us to pursue sound living – to let our good doctrine go on display through good, godly, sound lives.